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SUBJECT: FINLAND: AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: STATE 92335

¶1. Econ Assistant delivered reftel points to Dr Merja Saarinen, Ministry of Social Affairs' Ministerial Counselor for Health/medical Affairs, primary POC for Avian Influenza, and chairwoman of a pandemic preparation working group at the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Points were also delivered to Ms Taina Aaltonen, Director, Animal Health and Welfare, Department of Food and Veterinary Control, Finnish Food Safety Authority, EVIRA. Ms Saarinen responded that she will head a three-person delegation to the sixth International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, October 25-26. The other members are: Ms Outi Kuivasniemi, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and Ms Gisela Blumenthal, Counselor, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

¶2. In response to reftel regarding announcement of additional pledges of assistance, Saarinen expressed strong support for fighting avian and pandemic influenza. She noted however that due to Finland's tight budget situation, new pledges are highly unlikely.

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